

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 454. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1877.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## STRANGE WATERS.

BY R. E. FRANCESILLON,

AUTHOR OF "OLYMPIA," "PEARL AND EMERALD," &c. &c.

OVERTURE. III. ROME.

CHAPTER XII. PAN AND SYRINX.

It is hard to realise, impossible to exaggerate, the bitterness of the triumph of his own Comus to Andrew Gordon. It meant to him the triumph of bad art, with himself for hero; and that, to him, meant the throwing back of the triumph of good art for years and years to come. It never occurred to him that he could really have created a work of genius, and in little more than seven days; when the men about him, whose lives were given to music, only showed symptoms of creative genius at the intervals of angels' visits, and most of them never at all. He knew that with this thing, Comus, he had taken no pains, that he had worked at it as a vile task, with shame and against the grain, and that therefore it was, by every law of workmanship, justly doomed to fail. And he, who followed art like a religion, had degraded himself into the most wretched charlatan, or had, at best, allowed himself to be made the tool of one. Had Comus failed, imposture would have failed, and justice would have been done; but now——! He was the only man in all London who would not willingly have given ten years of his life for that one night of intoxicating glory; and, with well-nigh incredible perversity, he was one of the very few to whom has ever been granted the double gift of youth and triumph combined. And what could he think of those who had crowned him, after seeing an audience, of that high

order which listens indifferently to the finest music, go literally raving mad over his Comus—his, Andrew Gordon's? Could music be but a monstrous piece of humbug after all—those who make it, cheats, and those who think they love it, fools?

The next day he stayed at home, denied himself to all visitors, would not look at a newspaper, and threw all his letters unopened into the fire. The next, he shook from his feet the dust of a city which had given such a welcome as this to an impostor who had only meant to tickle a few ears for a week, and cheat them of a few guineas for charity's sake, and had intended even in that to fail as he deserved. There was nothing for him now but to go abroad for a time, till he and Comus were alike forgotten, and his life made clean again from its stain.

Of course he went to Italy. Italy was then considered a musical country. And of course—it need not be said—disappointment followed him there also. He began to suspect, at last, that Music, like her sister Painting, had died before he was born. But, if so, what a career, or rather what a religious duty, lay before the man who saw this clearly! For surely music could not really die; she could, at her very lowest, be but the sleeping beauty in the wood, waiting for the prince to come. It was with awe, and not without much misgiving, that he began consciously to devote his life to the work of cleansing the Augean stables of their defilement, and turning them into a pure temple.

Gradually he mapped out the rest of his life, like a monk making his vows. That was needful; for art is so long and life so short, that every moment had to be rigidly economised and strictly accounted

for. He was to keep his name, for many long and patient years, from ever being known or heard. He must keep his purpose secret; for he now knew the world well enough to be aware of the advantages of being a monomaniac, and the disadvantages of being thought or called one. So many years of his life, calculated as nicely as possible, were to be spent in making himself master of all the means whereby the great masters of old time worked out their results, and sent them straight from the mind to the heart without depending upon noise or machinery. So long again he was to meditate upon the nature of a perfect work to be the standard of perfect art in all its branches, and fix the point from which all music hereafter, in order to be right and true, must spring; the perfect figure of pure music, stripped of all her tricks and disguises, and, by her very aspect, abolishing for ever the devices of tradesmen and charlatans. And then, at last, the great work must be begun, ended, and finished—and then, and not till then, it must be revealed to the world. And then, if glory came to him therefrom, he would welcome it without shame; if not, he would be content that his work was done.

It was the dream that is called madness when it fails, genius when it wins. And now, while looking into the dark eyes of Noëmi under the moonlight, his grand hope took a yet more definite form. A strange Carnival-trick of fate had brought him a beautiful girl, young enough to wait full twenty years for her prime, as pure as a new-born child from modern so-called music and all its ways, of the land where people have voices, and of the race that can use them. If she only had the possibilities of a voice and the shadowiest ghost of a soul, she must have been expressly made for the chief instrument of her great work. He might make of her whatever he pleased—into more even than the equal of the great singers whose glory has not died with their songs, because they never sang until they could sing.

When one is young, all fine eyes have souls and can sing.

He promised the ear-rings without noticing that the request might imply another sort of soul than he was bargaining for, and then, by making her imitate as well as he could the very unmusical notes of his own deep and inflexible voice, satisfied himself that she had a tongue fit for tuning. He made

her sit beside him on a fragment of marble; and she, with imagined gold ear-rings dangling in the air before her eyes, tried to sing them into being.

Noëmi's had not been the only heart on the Corso that felt a cold sinking, when the withered old man and the fat old woman crawled by. For holidays, alas! have to be paid for—or at any rate people think so; and there would have been far less finery on people's backs that day and a great deal less merriment in the air, if more peace of pocket, had it not been for that pair of scarecrows. In a word, the lean scarecrow was no less a person than Signor Giuda Laragna, of the Ghetto.

Now the Jews of the Ghetto are not as a rule rich, and most are poor. But Signor Giuda Laragna was reputed to be worth the weight, not of himself, for that would be nothing, but of his wife, in gold. He was a dealer in bric-à-brac, but he kept no shop and was never known to sell anything. Indeed his customers mostly carried away with them more money than they brought him. A business conducted on such principles sounds more philanthropical than profitable. But there are back stairs to the court of Plutus as well as to any other; and how he came by so many treasures of costume, considering the ecclesiastical cut of many of them, the saints and the cousins of cardinals alone could tell. In short, Signor Giuda Laragna was the most famous money-lender in Rome, except—for it is always right to be strictly accurate—one rival, who, being a Christian and a Gentile, had more opportunities and advantages than were open to a citizen of the Ghetto. Their clients called Giuda Laragna "Il Purgatorio," and his rival, Demetrio Colombo, they called "L'Inferno." "Il Paradiso" was not at that time represented by any usurer in Rome.

But on that especial day, however it might be faring with L'Inferno, it was Il Purgatorio himself who was in purgatory. The many sufferers from the disease of cent. per cent. seized the chance of applying to the Carnival that rule of its ancestor, the saturnalia, that permitted slaves to turn the tables on their masters. Many a snake in the shape of a jest could easily be hidden under the innocent-looking cover of sweetmeats and flowers. There is a real, literal, practical magic about a crowd everywhere, on the Corso no less

than in Trafalgar-square. It not only has the art of appearing and vanishing and reappearing in an instant at any given spot, but, according to its temper, is provided at any given moment with materials that may be roses or rotten eggs at will. No rotten eggs, indeed, appeared on the Corso. But, by some strange conjuring trick, whenever Il Purgatorio and La Purgatoria happened to approach a carriageful of masked young men, the bouquets and sugar-plums wherewith they had been pelting the ladies in the windows invariably turned to squirts and parched peas.

The crew of wild beasts under the command of Punchinello especially distinguished itself in this surpassing witty proceeding; and they were so grotesquely and completely disguised, or rather so openly revealed in their true nature as bears, that their fun was even better than humorous—it was safe into the bargain. Not one need fear revengeful recognition when he next came to ask for time. By the time the couple had slowly traversed the length of the Corso, their dominoes were nearly drenched, and their faces were red with the stings of peas. But never once had Il Purgatorio hastened his crawl, nor La Purgatoria relaxed one atom of her incessant smile. Morally, they might have been carved out of wood for any effect that these jests at their expense seemed to have upon them.

But when the Corso cleared itself for the horse-race, then said Il Purgatorio:

"It's a good Carnival! How many peas did you get in your face, Salome? You counted them?"

"I couldn't count the peas," she said with a still broader smile if anything. "There were too many. But I kept account of the times. It was just two hundred and eighty-three. And a good dose each time."

"Two hundred and eighty-three! I got no more than two hundred and thirty-nine—but then your face is ever so much broader than mine. It gives twice as good an aim. Why, what with those that didn't hit and scattered, they must have used all the peas on the Corso; and then the syringes—it has been quite a stroke of business, Salome! Ah, it would never have come into Colombo's thick skull to send such wares as that on to the Corso at the feast of fools! They've paid better than candles or confetti. I saw the fools buying them up like wildfire as soon as

they saw you, Salome, within fifty yards of them——"

"You, Giuda," smiled La Purgatoria.

"No, you, Salome. But never mind; I know every mask in Rome, and every man that shot a pea will have to pay for it more than twice over before he's done. It was quite an idea; I didn't think it would turn out half as well. Next year I'll send a whole shipload of damaged oranges on the Corso. You won't mind a few oranges in your face, Salome? I'll take care they're all soft ones—and it's only once a year."

They did not wait for the Moccili. There could be no possible profit in walking unrecognised in the twilight—no doubt all the stock of squirts and peas had been exhausted already, and not even Il Purgatorio himself could do anything to increase the natural expenditure in candles. They turned their steps towards the Ghetto, and reached the gate well before curfew. Presently they reached the narrow street where stood the dilapidated, gloomy house, whence Noëmi had issued in the morning. The master raised his crutch-handled stick and struck three times, regulated like a signal, upon the door. After waiting about a minute, he struck again—the same three blows with the same measured interval after each of them.

They waited another minute. Then, "Noëmi!" called out the mistress in a shrill voice, that must have been heard across the Tiber. "Noëmi!—Are you asleep there?—Noëmi!"

Thrice more her husband knocked; but always in vain. He looked at his wife, and she back at him, with only so much of her smile left as had become chronic from persistent practice. The Ghetto was the safest and honestest corner in all Rome—except of course the uninhabited catacombs—and the Carnival was an honest time. But, nevertheless, somebody might have taken advantage of the holiday desertion of the Ghetto, to play some trick upon its richest citizen with instruments worse than syringes or dried peas.

It was a terrible thought. Noëmi might be murdered instead of only sound asleep, and the whole house plundered. La Purgatoria took hold of the iron handle of the door and shook it. In her shaking she gave it a push; it flew open, and sent her flying into the dark entrance with her head far before her heels. Her husband caught his toes in her skirt and flew after her through the door like a bat,

with his black domino flying open into the likeness of wings.

They extricated themselves from one another as they best could, rubbed their heads, and again looked at one another in too much dismay for immediate anger. Even the chronic remnant of her smile had, at last, been knocked out of the face of La Purgatoria. When they left in the morning for the Corso, that treacherous door had been barred, bolted, and chained as fast as door could be. And now it was open—and, what was worse, had been opened from the inside.

That meant that Noëmi was not murdered.

As if by the most wonderful magic of all that magical day, Il Purgatorio seemed all at once to lose his decrepitude, and La Purgatoria her unwieldiness. They scrambled and raced up the dark stairs. Presently they found a light, and went into every room. They found nothing, but they missed nothing—which was far stranger. At least they found nothing but a few nut-shells in the loft, and missed nothing but Noëmi.

"There is really nothing gone then?" asked La Purgatoria.

"Nothing," said Il Purgatorio, grimly. "Go down and chain up the door."

"And when the girl comes back?"

"She may come back; but she won't get in. Charity doesn't mean being obliged to keep a girl that opens the door to all the thieves and brigands in Rome, as soon as one's back's turned for an hour. It isn't her fault that there's the worth of a scudo left—it makes one creep to think of! Oh yes, she may come, and welcome, and break her knuckles on the door if she likes—it won't open so easy to her as it did to me."

"I'm sorry, though—we shall never get a girl so cheap—never again. She ate next to nothing, and never asked for more. There's the bread and the slice of sausage, that I left her for her dinner, unbitten to this hour. It has been a real charity to keep a girl like Noëmi."

"All I say is, you'll have to do everything yourself now, Salome. I'll never trust another, and as for her, I've done with her. Ah!"

They were standing in the dimly-lighted loft, surrounded by the wilderness of wonderful old clothes. Argus himself could not have distinguished one rag from another, where they lay heaped up together in every nook and corner. But the eyes of

Argus were, as everybody knew, nothing to those of Il Purgatorio, where the worth of a farthing was concerned.

"What is it?" exclaimed La Purgatoria breathlessly.

"If she's a hundred leagues away," cried out her husband, "I'll drag her back, and when she comes back I'll send her—a thousand leagues away! Look, Salome—look there!"

She looked; but her eyes were dim, not to say bleary.

"I see nothing—what, Giuda?—where?"

"That's it—you see nothing. You don't see the black lace mantilla—it's gone! Old spanish lace made by the nuns in Cordova. I was going to sell it to the Queen of Naples, and it's gone. It's worth every thread in gold, and it's gone off on a beggar's back, and I shall never see it again."

"But she can be stopped; there's the law——"

"A rotten orange for the law! Oh yes, the law will stop the girl, sure enough, but I don't want the girl; I want my mantilla. Do you think the law would let a thing like that, worth a gold piece for every thread, go back to the Ghetto? If you do, Salome, you're a fool. They'd ask me questions about that mantilla; and, if I told them the truth, they'd keep it, and if I told them lies, they wouldn't let me have it back again. But I will have it back—and therefore I won't go to law; but I'll follow Noëmi all over the world till I do. Charity, indeed! A rotten orange for charity! I see; it is a trick of that scoundrel Colombo. He has bribed my own servant to plunder me. He will give her a promise, and get my profit out of the Queen of Naples. But I'll be even with him—him and her. Great Heaven! I have lost the grandest piece of lace in all the world for the price of a parched pea!"

It is an infinitely wonderful thing, the way in which two lives will set out from opposite poles, travel by diverging roads, and yet—contrary to all the laws of mathematics—meet in the same point, more surely than if they had originally started from the same. Andrew Gordon had started from a cotton-mill in Lancashire, had made a short but exciting voyage through intense enthusiasm, violent success, bitter disappointment, and renewed visions of coming glory. Noëmi



had set out from the Roman Ghetto, as the orphan dependent upon the charity of a couple of misers and usurers; had never even heard of such a thing as art, nor even of an outer world save from the gossip of neighbours. And yet, if they had set out from the same point and travelled by the self-same road, they would not have arrived together under the shadow of the Colosseum on that Shrove Tuesday. It was their divergence that had brought them there.

Long before the moon went down Gordon satisfied his most anxious doubts, that he had found in Noëmi all that his vision of the future still lacked of perfection. Her voice, as he had hardly dared to hope in spite of her eyes, proved, after a very few experiments, to need only the tuning and moulding of a master, in order to become an instrument fit even for him, and to express the great music that was to be. But more even than in her voice he rejoiced in the ignorance that had kept her from being spoiled by others, and in the poverty that might deliver her to him. She was surely the very reed that grew without a voice by the river-side, blown this way and that by the wind, a mere lifeless thing, until Pan came and drew such music from it that the whole world listened and wondered.

He talked to her as men who are the slaves of one overwhelming idea talk to others—that is to say, as if their one idea were the one idea of all creation. He talked of things whereof she had never heard or dreamed—far over her head, and up among the clouds, where she could no more follow him than she could literally fly. But it all sounded very grand, like part of the Carnival. At last he said, suddenly and in the same tone of command in which he had bidden her follow him from the Corso:

"You will not go back to the Ghetto?"

Not she! She had not followed him above the clouds; but she had been able to follow him very well—half way. After all, one does not gossip with one's neighbours, even in the Ghetto, without learning something. She had not heard of art, but she had heard of artists. She had never been to the opera, but she knew all about the opera-house; some of those very neighbours were chorus-singers themselves. Combined with these hints, he made her understand very well that the life of a great singer was all made up of liberty, joy, plenty to eat and drink, nothing to do, velvets, satins, ear-rings,

brooches, and scudi—in a word, that it was all one eternal Carnival, such as she had seen to-day. As Gordon talked, the ear-rings he had promised her grew from gold to diamond. And could all this be for her—her, Noëmi Baruc of the Ghetto, the slave of La Purgatoria?

Pan was breathing a soul into Syrinx—with a vengeance. And so ended for both of them that romance of a Carnival. Or rather, so it began.

### JOHN BULL'S NEW HOUSE.

A CHANGE has come over John Bull. Once upon a time neither he nor his belongings were hard to please. Provided that his mulligatawny, cod's head and shoulders, and roast beef in winter, and his salmon and lamb in summer were the best of their kind, in perfect condition and judiciously cooked, his port-wine of proper age and temperature, and his sherry of a good "round" character, he was happy. As his fare was plain, so was his house—square as to shape, thick as to brickwork, ponderous as to furniture. There was a good, square, solid, heavy, respectable ugliness about his surroundings, which corresponded with his character. Old John was perhaps a little over-literal and heavy, but he was honest up to a certain point, and took an especial pride in eschewing the fippancies of life. He liked men's opinions to be square and on a sound foundation, like his dining-room chairs. The interior of his house savoured of mahogany and rosewood, all solid and good, innocent of veneer; and he liked his silver to be real, hating electro as the visible sign of all that was false and treacherous in a world already showing signs of decadence. Bull père is nearly extinct. Here and there may be found a fine old specimen, in wonderful preservation, but this type of old gentleman has been terribly thinned by the late spring and the east winds, and, bating an uncle—from whom the writer has expectations—he knows of but one specimen still extant among his tolerably large circle of acquaintance.

The gloom, ponderous respectability, and crushing genuineness of the English interiors of the last generation can only be realised by a visit to Bloomsbury, where in two or three old-fashioned houses may yet be seen the expression of the age which succeeded the comfortless

splendour of the Middle Ages, the tasteful luxuriance of the Renaissance, the gilded vulgarity of the Louis the Fourteenth, and the meretricious prettiness of the Pompadour period. There is no name for the peculiar style spoken of but the "Georgian." It represented excellently the genius of at least the first three Hanoverians, and must have suited the English people well enough, as they adopted it, and clung to it with curious tenacity, until the revival of mediævalism led the way to the present eclectic style of lining John Bull's nest. When mediævalism came into fashion, John Bull's house underwent a certain amount of renovation. His wife made away with his ugly but comfortable Georgian arm-chairs, and substituted in their place a regiment of picturesque articles of the *prie-dieu* kind, which pushed his knees up to his throat and hurt his back most fearfully. The fun of all this was that John's wife and daughters, having taste, persuaded the old gentleman that the new high-backed seats—the little-easy chairs as he dubbed them—were better for him than the hideous but luxurious old tub-chair he had revelled in for many years. Poor dear papa was afflicted with a tendency towards apoplexy, said Miss Bull; he should not be allowed to go to sleep after dinner, and the new chairs effectually corrected that dangerous tendency. This severe view of papa's post-prandial slumbers was brought to the mind of Miss Bull by the school of theology to which she had lately allied herself. A spinster of uncertain age, the worldliest of the worldly—she had of late taken to early matins, as a species of compensation for the dissipation of the evening, or rather night, before. As going to bed at three A.M., and turning out pale-faced and red-eyed at seven, in order to attend early service at St. Simon Stylites, appeared to Miss Bull a species of asceticism just severe enough to be fashionable, it was of course natural that she should wish to impose at least equal mortification upon her unhappy father. It is to no purpose that scoffers point out that old Bull is being hurried to his grave in his high straight-backed chair, and that his temper has never been the same since he was compelled to sit upright and listen to what he calls "symphonies and canzonets and things," instead of dropping quietly to sleep over a leading article. Even less heed is paid to the ribald remarks of Miss Jane Bull, a female

Gallio, who cares for none of these things. Miss Jane struggles against her mamma and elder sisters, but in vain. She protests that her elder sister, who is certainly not given to embonpoint, looks like a rag doll in her raiment of the latest fashion, and that it is "really quite too awful" to see her with her red hair and bilious complexion in a bottle-green dress. Miss Bull nevertheless has her own way, and one consolation is that she chops and changes that way frequently. No sooner had she worried her parents out of Bloomsbury into a Gothic villa at Kensington, without size, or light, or comfort of any kind, than she became a convert to the Queen Anne style, discovering all at once that combinations of red brick and white stone are the only domestic edifices on which the English eye can rest comfortably. The ribald Jane calls it the mutton-chop style of decoration, with its bulk of lean and fringe of fat; but sarcasm is thrown away, as every member of the household, Mr. Bull included, is anxious to escape from the Gothic villa, with its detestable staircases and general gloom. A lovely house is discovered about the middle of Putney-heath, not very handy to rail or omnibus, and requiring the addition of a couple of horses and as many servants to Mr. Bull's establishment. He grumbles, of course, but submits, and becomes the owner of a "perfectly lovely" Queen Anne mansion, of ruddiest brick and whitest coping, with great handsome bay windows, or rather window frames, carved and wreathed gables, mysteriously twisted chimneys, and a portico with abundant terra-cotta mouldings, and little squabby columns of granite to support the arch. It is a delightfully eclectic style of architecture, possessing the enormous advantage of giving the mind a wide range of activity while engaged in contemplating it. The windows carry one back to the age of Elizabeth, the twisted chimney-stacks to that of Wolsey, the carved gables to the genuine Queen Anne period, and the terra-cotta portico with the Byzantine columns to the Venice of Marco Polo. To some prejudiced minds it may appear that a structure of this composite character reveals the poverty of nineteenth-century invention, but Mrs. Bull and Miss Bull are in raptures. Bull only tries to make a stand upon one point. He insists, with insular dullness and directness, that, as windows are made not only to admit light and air, but

in some measure to be seen through, the best material for them is plate-glass of the best quality. Mrs. and Miss Bull are horrorstruck. The purpose of a window may be to admit air and light, that is such light as will not jar upon the highly strung æsthetic fibre—but to be seen through! Horrible idea! The scenery of Putney-heath is fine doubtless, and celestial harmonies arise in the artistic soul as the eye travels over the wide expanse of yellow gorse, and rests lovingly on the purple hills in the background. But all this can be enjoyed by going out of doors; while within, no one should think of looking out of window. Any such rash act would be a reflection on the arrangement of the interior, which should be so ordered as to retain the poet mind in a species of harmless ecstasy. Wherefore the not very large space left between the mullions shall be filled in with glass certainly, but glass of that dark bottle-green hue which serves the double purpose of refreshing the eye and permitting the profuse employment of colour within the apartment. Moreover, the bottle-green glass shall be divided into lozenge-shaped pieces, so that any attempt to look through it shall reduce nature to a tartan pattern. It is of no use for Mr. Bull to insinuate that when people glazed their windows with tiny diamond panes of bottle-green, joined by so much lead that a window contained as much opaque as diaphanous matter, they did so, not from artistic considerations, but because they knew no better and had no plate-glass, just as country squires came to town in a coach-and-six because the locomotive was yet unknown. This reference to the superiority of the railway over the old roads, or rather quagmires, of the bottle-green period is pronounced almost vulgar of Bull père, and his "pleasure dome" is adorned at immense expense with a fine collection of "bull's-eye" panes of the deepest hue. Submitting in high dudgeon, he finds a safety-valve for his ill-humour in the remark that the complexions of the female members of his family will, in a sea-green light, require "even more colour than they put on now," and then takes himself off without affording the chance of a reply.

Fashion having changed of late, Mr. Bull escapes the horror of living in rooms coloured in imitation of weak coffee, or gloomy celadon. The latter hue is reserved for the dado, above which extends a wall-

paper of strictly conventional pattern, sombre in hue, and designed with the express purpose of avoiding the representation of any natural object more graceful than a sunflower, a chrysanthemum, a camomile flower, or a marigold. The head of the family pronounces the effect "dingy" and dear, but by this time is crushed into a sullen state of acquiescence. His objection to the ugliness of the interior decorations of his house is met by the remark that the decoration has not commenced, that all that has been done is merely to put in the background for subsequent decorations. As the adornment, or, as he thinks, disfigurement, of his dwelling has already cost him a pretty penny, he buttons up his pockets, but, as the event proves, prematurely, for the intelligence of his family (with the exception of Miss Jane Bull, who prefers lawn-tennis, archery, and riding across country to South Kensington) is focussed upon one object, the extraction of a big cheque for blue-and-white china and Chippendale. Meanwhile he is put into good temper by being permitted to superintend personally the fitting up of the billiard-room. This important apartment has been designed by young Gargoyle the architect, and is like a Tudor chapel, with handsome arched roof, marvellous store of painted tiles, and a man in armour at each corner, the walls being adorned with rapiers, left-hand daggers, arquebuses, matchlocks, and other choice weapons; Bull père having been lucky enough to pick up the whole for a cheque of four figures. Mrs. Bull pleads hard that for the sake of consistency there shall be no divans—modern but comfortable abominations—round the walls, but, in their stead, delicious straight-backed settles of oak, or those backless seats of which the modern camp-stool is the lineal descendant. Mr. Bull has, in his own phraseology, "stood a good deal," but outraged patience rises against uncomfortable seats in his billiard-room. So that hated anachronism, the divan, is established in the billiard-room of Castle Bull, and the placid owner thereof is prepared to endure innumerable outrages. At first he kicks a little against blue-and-white china, and suggests that the precursors of the willow-pattern plate have no special interest for him, but he is gently wooed to the yielding point. His family condescend to reason with him. At a late hour he learns that his entire dwelling has been constructed with reference to the "decorative" em-

ployment of "blue and white," that all the money invested in dingy wall-papers adorned with bilious chrysanthemums is thrown away, unless he "lights up" the dreary expanse with cabinets of Nankin vases and rows of platters hung against the walls. Papa says, faintly, having the houses of æsthetic friends in his mind's eye, that plates are made to eat from and not to be hung against the wall; but his observation elicits nothing beyond a titter and a few sotto voce remarks that "poor papa is not in it," whatever that may mean. So a fashionable dealer is consulted, and the result is a cab-load of Nankin and Japanese blue-and-white, pending the arrival of some choice pieces that the dealer awaits from abroad. Not always will that astute trader bring forth his choicest wares on demand. He knows better, and prefers to let his hapless customer wander dejectedly about his shop—"gallery" he calls it—seeking for "hawthorn" and "powder blue with raised white figures," and finding them not, till in sheer desperation the purse-strings are opened, widely enough, for second-rate crockery. This performed, the skilled operator writes to his new client to inform him that in a day or two some great treasures will be in his possession, and that he should like Mrs. Bull to have the first sight of them. The unhappy lady is overcome by the "points" of the really handsome vases newly arrived from the Republic of Nowhere. She marks the beauty of their form, high-shouldered though it be, and admires the richness of the blue ground, dashed and splashed as it were by a master hand—a "magnificent colour-cadence," as Professor Dunkelwitz puts it. She goes into raptures over the elegance of the design and the graceful curves of the hawthorn sprigs—which, by-the-way, were not intended by the Nankin artist, who drew them some two or three hundred years ago, for hawthorn at all. And she cries aloud over the beauty of the glaze, the brilliancy of the white, and she pays a noble price for the "finest hawthorns in England." These treasures must be stored in a cabinet specially constructed to that end, for no risk may be run with china "positively unique"—that is bating a few thousand specimens in Holland and elsewhere.

The suspension of the blue-and-white platters against the walls of the Bull mansion, is an undertaking on which much genius is brought to bear. Professor Dunkelwitz is consulted of course, and so

is that wild enthusiast Algernon Fitz-crackell, who does not send his pictures to the Academy, nor even to the Grosvenor Gallery, preferring to reserve them for the admiration of his own particular friends. When Mrs. and Miss Bull, assisted by these gentlemen, have succeeded in so disposing their punch-bowls, dishes, and vases as to produce the maximum of "decorative" effect, Bull père is asked in a triumphant tone, what he thinks of the rooms now. It is perhaps hardly worth while to record his answer. There is something in it about willow-pattern plates, kitchen-dressers, and plate-racks; but it is better suppressed, although that enfant terrible, Miss Jane, laughs exceedingly, and declares, in her peculiar dialect of the English language, that "the governor is quite the cheeriest old bird" she knows.

Besides the "decorative" blue and white, there are other odds and ends of crockery, ancient and modern, all over Mr. Bull's new house. Entering the conservatory, one is startled by the apparition of two enormous blue dogs, apparently of oriental ancestry. Near these cerulean monsters reposes a yellow cat of portentous size, its huge jaws distended by a frightful grin—a Chinese variety of the real Cheshire article. These agreeable creatures are much valued by the æsthetic portion of the household, as supplying the necessary complement of colour to the general effect—heightened also by sky-blue and rose-pink flower-pots. Round about the halls and staircases lurk tall, long-necked Japanese vases, graceful and tasteful; then come more Chinese jars, more blue dogs and yellow cats, apparently keeping an eye on several gigantic herons, storks, and cranes, slightly out of place, perhaps, on a staircase—but this is hyper-criticism. Modern crockery is by no means confined to the outworks, so to speak, of Castle Bull. Every member of the family, save its head, has been painted on porcelain by the clever lady who has made this art fashionable, and their faces smile from the depths of enormous salvers. They are good likenesses, although purposely strong in outline, and are very skilfully painted, albeit Mrs. Bull would perhaps have looked better against a cooler background than a clump of peonies, and Miss Bull's auburn hair hardly needs an aureole of sunflowers.

The crockery actually used by the household is of the most fashionably artistic



kind. Old-fashioned "geometrical" designs are abandoned; that is to say, it is now held a crime to put any ornament whatsoever in the middle of plate, dish, or cover. Instead of the dull uniformity of Sèvres and old Worcester, the new school imitate—after a fashion—the artists of Japan. Wherefore butterflies, and egrets, herons, and bulrushes crop up now on the side of a vegetable dish, and anon on the edge of a plate; charming the eye—so protest the connoisseurs "with infinite variety." Mr. Bull takes the liberty of dissenting from this view, and holds that what he calls "the slap-dash style" of ornament makes everything look lop-sided—and that the "variety" is imaginary. "Stuff and nonsense about Japanese variety—nothing of the kind—they can't produce anything without that confounded mountain Fusi—what-is-it in the middle, and as for the long-legged bird with the bulrush by his side, I have seen him a thousand times. The only variety is, that sometimes he stands on one leg, sometimes on the other." Whether the constant contemplation of art in various forms tends to soften the ruggedness and cruelty instinct in the human bosom, may be doubted by those who have studied the history of the Italian republics, and remember that the French king who invited Benvenuto Cellini to Paris, and our English Harry, the patron of Holbein, understood the "sacred fire" best as applied to heretics. At any rate, it has not abated the downrightness of Bull père to any perceptible extent. Yet he is clothed—"wrapped, and thoroughly lapped," as Bishop Still has it—in art. Not only does he dine from off porcelain adorned with the image of the creatures he devours, but the cold water, of which his consumption is not great, and the hot, which forms part of the "materials" of the evening's final libation, are brought to him in curious jugs, some of valuable Grès de Flandres, others of the handsome work known as Doulton ware. To all this he submits with a fair semblance of cheerfulness, and is only occasionally given to rebel on the subject of table-glass and decorations. Miss Bull, who has a genius for these things, has built up a strange lamp. A punch-bowl serves, when turned over, as a base for a Nankin jar to hold the oil, and while this centre-piece is to the fore, its inventrix will suffer no flowers but primroses, daffodils, or yellow roses, with a view to the celestial harmonies of colour evolved from blue and

pale yellow. On the subject of glass she is even more tyrannical—the bottle-green fever being very high on this subject. Now her father has a vulgar idea that glass, when in the form of a vessel for holding good liquor, should be as thin and transparent as possible, to the end that the colour of the wine—in his opinion an important object—should be seen. He is not bigoted, however, and when it became customary to engrave crests upon drinking-glasses, never grumbled at the expense; remarking at the time, that there was compensation in all things, as the new-fashioned glasses held nearly twice as much as the old. But he "shies," as Miss Jane states the case, terribly at the array placed at his side of late. There is a Venetian glass to begin with, towering above a tall stalk as if it had run to seed, stuck all over with things like jujubes or brandy-balls, and holding very little sherry. Next comes a hock glass of unwholesome yellow colour, but fairly capacious, of good, jovial, round-bellied figure; and then a champagne glass—alas, how unlike the vast pail-shaped ones at the club!—of a sickly olive hue, with an unwholesome twist or spiral in it, and containing hardly enough Perrier Jouët to moisten the lips. It is not till the Lafitte and Romanée Centi are reached, that a transparent glass is allowed to appear, and even then the effect of the purple vine-juice is destroyed by a white thing like vermicelli, cunningly and maliciously spun into the fabric of the glass. The decanters alone show signs of common sense, being mostly of the good old tankard and flagon shape; with the handles and spouts set on at the right angle for pouring. The Bull family have some very good family plate; but this, much to the discomfiture of the heretic father, is only set upon the table on very grand occasions, and then only under protest; for it is a sin and shame to risk the existence of genuine Queen Anne, and early Georgian salt-cellars, and butter-boats, candlesticks, and flagons. As a rule, these precious articles occupy a cabinet, and excite the envy, hatred, and malice of collectors, whose mouths water at the sight of the heavy, square-footed candlesticks, and cradle-shaped sancières. Mr. Bull once very nearly provoked a revolution by suggesting that "the awkward old stuff" should be melted down, and a fresh service made by an eminent firm of silversmiths.

In other matters pertaining to domestic

comfort and elegance, Mr. Bull's new house is not amiss. The collection of pictures by the old masters, made by his great grandfather under the advice of the famous Lord Chesterfield, has been sent down to Christie's, and sold to the highest bidder, whose offers were not very high for the oily madonnas and greasy saints and martyrs, for which English people at one time parted with their ready money very freely. Without pretending to any especial æsthetic culture, the master of the house knows a good picture when he sees it, and has collected a number of choice water-colours and a few cabinet pictures in oils. These, with a few fine bronzes, satisfy his requirements as to art. On one point he has stood firm against the tears of his eldest daughter, and the arguments, lengthy if not convincing, of Professor Dunkelwitz. He will not have pictures of the early Italian school, with their golden backgrounds and wrynecked, over-trained devotees. They are, as he says, briefly, "beyond him." He has a weakness for drawing and perspective, and he will have naught to say to the Byzantines. He is greatly gratified by the recent revolution in favour of Chippendale, to the extinction of straight-backed chairs. The worthy Chippendale, who dwelt in St. Martin's-lane a little more than a century ago, was a cabinet-maker after Mr. Bull's own heart. Hardly original, for the best Chippendale furniture follows French forms very closely, it is yet conspicuous for a certain breadth of design and chastity of ornament. Sublime architects may laugh at the upholsterer who wrote to prove that an accurate acquaintance with the various orders of architecture, from the Tuscan to the Composite, is necessary to the man who aspires to design a good cabinet, chair, or table; but the works of Chippendale remain to show, that he really carried the principles of proportion out in practice. His chairs are cast in ample mould and are exactly adapted to the dimensions of Bull père. Whether they stand squarely on straight legs, or on limbs curved like unto those of a bull-dog, they are always firm, strong, and up to any weight. Daniel Lambert might have sat down, as he doubtless often did, in a Chippendale chair without the slightest fear of bringing its existence to a premature end. Wherefore Mr. Bull rejoices in his Chippendale, and for its sake forgets the startling needlework which pervades his house to almost the same extent as

crockery. It is, he thinks, quite of a piece with the wall-paper and the porcelain portraits on a lily or sunflower ground; but he is not exacting, and provided he gets two days' hunting in the week, and is not pestered about ecclesiastical squabbles, is a cheerful man and a tractable. He is more famous for his appetite than his jokes, but when he perpetrates a witticism it lasts him for a long time. He, so to speak, chews the cud of it with infinite delight. Between him and his daughter Jane there is current an epithet, which, if applied to his house in the presence of mamma and Miss Bull, would probably provoke lengthy remonstrance, for the old fellow and his madcap daughter never speak to each other of home save as the "New Curiosity Shop."

### NETTIE'S BABY.

A STORY.

"BUT surely an infant like that can't learn anything?"

It was a large, long room, with white-washed walls and a bare, scrubbed floor. Round the wall was a row of desks and benches in rough unpainted deal, lined with girls, large and small, in dark brown dresses and white pinafores, with their hair cut to a regulation length and plaited in regulation tails tied at either ear. Lighting them, a couple of large windows, set too high in the wall for idlers to recreate themselves by looking out; but letting in plenty of pure April sunshine and a view of turquoise-blue sky, and the boughs of a cherry-tree laden with blossoms and waving in the fresh breeze without. In the middle of the floor a baby!

It was seated in the centre of a square patch of sunlight, broken by the flickering shadow of the cherry blossoms; and the sunbeams streaming in on it seemed to blend and melt with the wealth of tangled, curly gold, which hung over the round face and dimpled shoulders, and bring out the tender carnations of the little naked feet peeping from under the blue-checked frock, and held tightly in either fat, rosy-fingered hand. A child for a monarch to own, and Leslie or Leighton to paint; but only a pauper baby all the same, though seated there like a queen in the midst of her courtiers with a half-pout on the dewy, scarlet lips and a saucy gleam in the broad blue eyes, which laughed up at me from under their silky lashes as I looked at her.

"Baby is in disgrace, ma'am," said the teacher severely; "I wouldn't notice her

if I was you, a-taking off her shoes and socks in school like a casual ward's child. I was just saying she don't ought to be here if she can't be'ave herself."

Baby's eyes glanced curiously up at mine, and reading, I fear, some irrepressible mirth therein, laughed out more than before, turning away to contemplate with some satisfaction the little worn shoes and blue socks lying on the floor beside her. She was evidently not a child with a keen sense of her own iniquities; but the teacher's eye was on me, and so, to repress my own unseemly levity, I made the remark previously mentioned. A movement among the girls ensued, and I saw that one was edging herself forward, and putting up her hand as if she wanted to speak. The teacher seemed to understand it so at any rate, for she answered somewhat sharply.

"Yes, Nettie, I know what you want to say, but you mustn't speak without you're spoke to. She's the baby's sister, ma'am," turning back to me, "and, I believe, does her best to train her into decent, orderly ways; not but what of course it's again all rules to have so young a child here."

"Poor little thing! Yes, indeed, I should think her too young to be trained," I said, stooping down to pat the golden mane, but as I did so my eyes turned on the sister, and I was startled by the anxious, pleading expression of those which met mine. They were very dark gray eyes, shining out with an almost weird-like depth from the framing of the sharp, colourless face and pale hair with an ashen tinge in it, and belonged to a crippled girl of about thirteen, with her shoulders drawn nearly up to her ears; a figure stunted enough for a child of ten, and hands so long and frail, as to look painfully out of keeping with the square red fingers of her companions.

"Your little sister, is she?" I said, and then as she answered with a quiet "Yes, m'm," and a curtsy, her eyes turning with a flash of irrepressible pride on the culprit, I added, kindly:

"You seem very fond of her. Is she the only one?"

"Yes, m'm, please. I haven't got ne'er another left me nowhere, an' that's why they lets me 'ave 'er here; but she ain't a baby indeed, m'm. She's near three years old, an' you wouldn't think how quick she are to learn, an' as good as gold, leastways generally," with a sorrowful glance at the tiny pink feet. "I don't know whatever

went wrong wi' 'er to-day, but it ain't often; teacher'll tell you it ain't. I don't doubt she'd do 'er countin' beautiful now, if so be you'd ask teacher to let her go back, please, m'm."

It struck me forcibly that it might be pleasanter for a chubby infant of three to roll about on the sunny floor, than to be seated on a hard bench to "do her countin';" but the wan-looking little elder sister evidently thought otherwise; so I made the request. The next moment the little one was hoisted on to a bench at her sister's side, where she proceeded to drop certain dried peas into holes drilled in a thick piece of stick at the rate of three, two, or one, according to order; a process in which I much fear she was not unassisted by the suggestive finger of the elder girl, perched like a frail old bird at her nestling's side.

Baby, however, seemed to look on the whole affair as a capital joke, laughing out in a little clear treble when she had achieved counting four peas into a hole, and echoing the teacher's approving

"There's a good girl," with a complacent

"Es, me's welly dood dirl now," which provoked me to kiss the round glowing cheek.

"Tell the lady your name, petsy dear," said Nettie, her own wan face quite radiant with my evident admiration of her pupil, and baby answered pertly:

"Aggalinairly," looking at me as much as to say, "There! what do you think of that?"

Nettie came to the rescue.

"Magdalen Mary, she says, please m'm. Quite a growed-up name too, ain't it, pet? An' I don't know what they call you 'baby' for, as if you weren't out o' long clothes, a clever girl like you!"

"Tever dirl lite me. Not in lon' toves at all," echoed Magdalen Mary, a sally which set off four or five of the girls laughing, and in the midst of which the matron led me out of the schoolroom to inspect the rest of the buildings.

It was nothing but a branch workhouse for junior paupers, though it went by the name of the "district school." A square, ugly, brick building, divided into two parts to separate the boys from the girls, with a flagged courtyard in each, surrounded by a covered corridor, where the children could play in wet weather; and standing in the middle of a somewhat extensive potato and cabbage ground, in the cultivation of which some of the elder boys assisted. It

stood on a hill a little above the village, and looked down on the red roofs and square church tower, half hidden by trees of the latter, and the subtle windings of the silver Thames beyond. A fair breezy place for children to find home and shelter in; and I lingered on the doorstep, while I asked a few questions respecting the strangely-contrasted sisters who had so interested me.

It was rather a touching story.

Nettie and her baby were the children of a very decent woman, once a servant in the village below the hill. Like too many of her class, however, she had married unfortunately; and, after struggling for ten years to support her drunken husband and young children, had died, worn out by privations and overwork, about six months after the birth of Magdalen Mary. There had been several other children between this last baby and the crippled girl, but they had all died off in different childish ailments; her husband had deserted her twelve months previously; and, when the poor woman died, it was found that so far from leaving anything for her children, there was not enough money in the old stocking under the mattress to pay for the coffin in which her worn-out body was carried to the grave. Naturally, Nettie and the baby had to go to the workhouse.

People were very kind to them, as they mostly are in cases of real trouble, let the world grumble as it will; and more than one offered to take Nettie—who was well known to be a child unusually quick with her needle, and handy and helpful in all household matters—and make use of her in minding children and other odd jobs for which her misshapen limbs did not incapacitate her; while one lady, for whom the mother had washed, wrote to say that she could get her into a "Home" for crippled girls, where she would be well taught and cared for, and put in the way of earning her own livelihood.

But both these offers necessitated a separation from Magdalen Mary—the rosy, dimpled babe, whom, almost from her birth, Nettie had taken under her special care, and fed, tended, and watched over with a perfect passion of love and devotion, while the mother was toiling at her needle for them both—the child whom, with her last words, that mother had confided to her, saying, "Take care of baby when I'm gone, Nettie. She's most fonder o' you than me already. Bless her dear heart!"

And to think of giving her up to any one else after that, and letting her grow fonder of other people, strangers who couldn't care for her one half as much as she (Nettie) did, how could the jealous little elder sister bear that? Or the still worse idea—so infinitely worse, indeed, that it left no room for the former—of baby pining, perhaps sick, perhaps ill-treated, with only some workhouse woman to look after her, while Nettie, her proper guardian, was being well fed and cared for far away.

No, if it must be separation or the workhouse for both, the workhouse it must be; and so into it they went, their united possessions tied up in an old blue coverlet, which had belonged to the children's cot as far back as Nettie could remember, and Magdalen Mary fast clasped in the elder's gaunt little arms—about the most helpless-looking couple that had ever entered that great receptacle for human want and improvidence. Yet even there, much as workhouses are abused, the sisters found friends and kindness.

"If I may only take keer on my baby myself," had been Nettie's one request, urged with such quivering lips and brimming eyes, and such a pitiful clutch at the innocent object of her devotion, that it would have required a hard heart to deny her. When her petition was granted, she showed herself so tremblingly-anxious to prevent its withdrawal, and manifest her gratitude, by giving a helping hand and eye to as many other babies as possible, and working doubly hard at school-hours into the bargain, that she not only became a favourite with the whole house, but, in course of time, won, by her good conduct and general proficiency, a title to be elected among the number of those damsels annually drafted off to that branch establishment—the district school—already mentioned, which was regarded by the junior inmates of the house as a sort of rural heaven, conferring dignity and respectability "in perpetuance" on the happy denizens of its red-brick walls.

But even with this coveted honour within her grasp, Nettie felt that she could not be happy, nor care to exchange her coarse blue-check gown for one of neat brown stuff, with a snow-white bib and apron, and a seat in the pretty village church where her mother had been christened, unless Magdalen Mary might go with her; and though that young person



was now between two and three years old—a healthy and precocious damsel, petted by the whole establishment, and queening it over all about her and her sister and slave in particular—she was much too far below the regulation age of five, to have any chance of being admitted into the district school on her own merits.

It seemed likely that, after going into the workhouse on the little one's account, Nettie would have to remain there for the same reason, and give up the superior prospects and advancement of the schools, as she had given up the home which her mother's friends had offered her two years back. But, as it happened, Heaven was kinder to the deformed girl than she expected. Perhaps the good name she had earned during the last two years stood her in stead; or, perhaps, the clergymen and others constituting the board had children of their own, and saw some argument beyond mere reason in the high-shouldered little girl, with the wistful eyes and thin hand fast clasping that of her pet and plaything. Anyhow, it was announced that the case was postponed till two months later for a decision. Babies, of course, were not eligible to the district schools; but if it could be proved that Magdalen Mary was not a baby, but a child capable of receiving tuition and dispensing with a nurse, the matter might be taken into consideration; and even with this glimmer of a hope, Nettie's spirits rose to such a pitch that, to have dashed them down again would have required the cruelty of a Nero.

Indeed, she worked hard to win the chance before her. It was from this day that baby ceased to be "baby," and became, by her sister's ordinance, Magdalen Mary, both names in full, and abbreviations sternly prohibited! Also she learnt, at the cost of all poor Nettie's play-hours, to point out A, B, C in an old primer, to count the pretty little pink fingers of one hand with those of the other, and to amuse herself by sewing large buttons on to a piece of coarse sacking with a needle carefully blunted by Nettie, lest she should put out an eye, or stab herself to the heart in the attempt; efforts which, being triumphantly displayed at the end of the two months, won the day by an overwhelming majority, and carried her under the wing of the flushed and happy Nettie into the haven where I found them.

This was the story which the matron told me; and simple as it was, I suppose

it served to fix the children in my mind; for though I left S—— the following morning, I did not forget them; and on my next visit to the little Berkshire village some twelve months later, one of the first things I asked my hostess, the vicar's wife, was as to how the sisters were getting on.

Mrs. Bartram smiled.

"Nettie and her baby? Oh, very well, till just lately. Nettie won the Bible prize for good conduct last Christmas; and Magdalen Mary is growing quite a big girl. Nettie, who has a very sweet voice, is to be taken into the choir at midsummer, and is trying all she can to teach the little one to sing the Morning Hymn, that she may still have her at her side in church. I only hope they won't catch these horrid measles."

"Have you got them at the schools?"

"Yes, we have five down with them now in the infirmary. It is very provoking; and, I am sorry to say, Nettie has been twice in disgrace during the last few days in consequence. Her terror lest Magdalen Mary should take the infection seems to have quite put her beside herself. I am going up there now. Fortunately, my children have had it, so there is no danger."

"And I will go with you. I should like to see little Goldenhair again. She reminded me of my little Susy."

And so we set out, talking, as mothers will, of our children living and dead, as we walked up the breezy hill in the pleasant sunshine, with the vivid green leaves of the horse-chestnuts overhead opening their delicate fans and spires of pale green blossom, so soon to change into creamy white or rose-pink under the warmer rays of opening summer. Already, indeed, the snowy clusters of the blackthorn were beginning to fall under the pressure of the tiny emerald leaves quick opening behind; and the primroses, which a little while before had made a pale yellow sunshine in grassy banks and hedgerows, were fading beneath the ruddier gold of the real luminary, while down under the shadow of the woods, the bluebells made an azure mist upon the ground, the hart's-tongue unrolled its pale green blade, and the wild arum reared its yellow or dark red spike. It was a lovely day, one of those whose very freshness and purity seem to make sickness and death things too strange and far-off for realisation; but when we reached the schools, the grave countenance of the girl who

opened the door, and the graver looks of the matron who received us, soon brought our minds back to the sorrowful inconsistencies of life; and Mrs. Bartram's kind face grew sober beneath the news which awaited her. Four more children had sickened, and one was dead. It was a particularly bad form of measles; and the infirmary would soon be full at this rate.

"It's chiefly the little ones that has taken it as yet, ma'am," said the matron, "and their having so little sense makes 'em more difficult to manage. Our hands are quite full; an' I'm glad you came up to-day, for that child Magdalen Mary, there's no doing anything with her without her sister. She seems quite crazy."

"Nettie's baby? Has she taken it, then?" Mrs. Bartram asked, but was answered by a shake of the head.

"No, ma'am, it's Nettie herself. She sickened yesterday; and, indeed, I wasn't sorry when it came out on her; for she'd been that bad-tempered, not to say evil-behaved, for two days before, I couldn't think what had come to her. She went so far as to strike Sarah Watson, and was quite saucy to the teacher when spoke to about neglecting her work. We had to take away all her good-conduct marks, and threaten her with speaking to the vicar, which she minds more than anythink else; but yesterday evening the spots come out all over her, an' explained it; an' as I was saying, I'd be almost glad it was that, but for the little one, who kept the others awake by crying half the night for her sister, and has done little else all day."

"Poor child! I daresay she misses Nettie. I'll go and speak to her," said Mrs. Bartram, compassionately, and went off to the playground, whence indeed lusty screams were even then proceeding from a small golden-haired maiden, who was vigorously resisting the efforts of two bigger girls to lead her off somewhere, with shouts of: "Don't want oo. Wants my Nettie. Won't do nuffin 'less my Nettie comes."

There are some women whose very presence has a soothing effect, and the vicar's wife was one of them. I only waited to see the little scarlet cheek, damp with tears, pressed against her gown, and hear the passionate voice breaking into a gurgle of infant laughter, before I went in search of Nettie to see how she was faring.

She was in the infirmary, a detached white cottage standing at a little distance from the schools in a square plot full of wallflowers and scarlet-runners; and there

was something very pitiful in the change from the gold and ruby blossoms of the flowers gleaming in the sunshine, the brilliant blue sky and wind-tossed branches of the elms and larches, in all the first glitter of their April greenness, to the close still room inside and the ten little beds, five on either side, and all full, save that from which the small occupant had been carried to a narrower resting-place only that morning. Nettie's cot was between this and the wall, and on leaning over the poor child I saw at once that she was very ill, her face so swollen and marked as to be almost unrecognisable, and her eyes half-closed and glazed with the fever which burnt in her little thin hands. She knew me, however, and her face brightened when I spoke to her.

"Oh yes, m'm, I mind you well. You came to the school one day last year an' took notice o' Magdalen Mary. Most folk do that; but you kissed 'er so kind, an' you'd on a violet gownd. She used to talk o' the 'pretty lady' for a long time arter. Please, m'm, 'ave you seen 'er to-day?"

I told her yes, and that I had just left her very happy with the vicar's wife. Nettie smiled.

"Mrs. Bartram's always good to child'n, an' baby's real fond of 'er, she is. I've been fearin' she'd be dreadful lonesome an' fractions without me. Did you 'ear if she was, please, m'm?" and there was an anxious look in the dull eyes, a restless twitching of the fingers, which rather embarrassed me as to an answer. Smoothing back the scanty hair of her hot face I answered gently:

"She misses you of course, Nettie. It wouldn't be natural if she didn't; but everyone is very kind to her; and you mustn't fret about her now, or you'll make yourself worse, and then you will be longer in getting back to her."

"Yes, m'm, an' maybe they'd go for to be tired o' lookin' arter her, an' she'd get inter mischief. I will try to be quiet, but——" It was not easy, I saw, for even while I was reading to her, she interrupted me twice—once to ask how long I thought it would be before she could get back to her baby, and once, was she quite well, quite well and happy, when I saw her? Poor child! she apologised humbly both times for breaking into the story, but it was plain that her little sister was more interesting to her than any book-children, and when I took her hand at leaving, the

burning fingers clasped round mine in a tight clutch as she asked with feverish eagerness :

"Ma'am, please, you ben't going back from 'ere to the well children, be you?"

"My dear, did you think I should be so thoughtless? I am going for a long walk to gather cowslips; and I shall bring you some to-morrow; but not unless you promise me to go to sleep now, and put every thought out of your head, except getting well as soon as possible."

And then I went away, wondering if there were many children in rich nurseries who loved one another with the intense, unselfish devotion of this little orphan for her sister.

The following day was raw and chilly. The blue sky was blotted out in gray, and broken up into ragged rain-clouds by a cold east wind. Drops hung heavily from the dark red blossoms of the wall-flowers, and the thatch on the eaves; and there was no sunbeam, to pierce the corners of the shawl hung across the high window for the benefit of the sick children's eyes, and brighten the melancholy room. It mattered very little to Nettie. Three of the children were better, and had been removed to the convalescent room upstairs; and no others had filled their places; but she was just in the height of the disease, and lay covered up closely, too fevered and languid even to trouble about her baby, and only murmuring a feeble "Thank you, m'm," as I sat beside her, cooling her hot brow with eau-de-cologne, and fanning her with the bunch of fragrant cowslips I had brought in with me. Suddenly, the quiet was interrupted. Since the measles had broken out in the schools, the children had been allowed more than usual outdoor exercise; and even in the sick-room we could hear, softened by distance, the merry voices and laughter of a lot of them at play in a field on the other side of the road. Of a sudden this stopped, and instead, there rose into the air a long, sharp cry. It was only one at first; but was echoed by a perfect chorus of cries and shrieks coming nearer, and forming themselves into such words as: "She's fallen in!" "Who?" "There she is!" "Oh, someone get her out!" And involuntarily I sprang to the window and looked out. On the other side of the little garden and the road was a marshy field, with a pond in one corner of it, yellow at this season with marsh marigolds. Round this pond half-a-dozen girls were already

gathered, straining at something dark in the centre of it. Other girls were running from the adjoining meadow, where they had been at play; and from a distant shed two labouring men were hurrying to the scene. Even some of the sick children sat up in their beds, and Nettie, who had fallen into a quiet doze, opened her eyes and asked feebly what had happened, that the people were crying.

"It is only a girl who has hurt herself," I said, dropping the curtain and speaking quite quietly. "I am going to help her; but I will be back in a moment; so lie still all of you, or you will catch cold."

And then I drew the blanket closer round Nettie, and hurried out of the room, shutting the door behind me. I had guessed at one glance that that dark object in the pond was a drowning child; and I could not sit still when any helping hand might be of use; but to my dying day I shall never forgive myself for not having called the nurse, who had left the room when I entered it, to resume her charge of the invalids. It was not a hundred yards from the cottage to the pond, but speaking to the children had delayed me; and the men were there first, and were dragging out a dripping, mud-stained figure, which they handed over to me just as I arrived on the scene. Ah, dear me! Well might poor Nettie worry herself about the truant feet and wilful spirit of her charge! It did not need the name repeated in a dozen keys of fear and sorrow by her playfellows; hardly the golden curls still gleaming through the weight of black mud which had soaked through the little brown frock, and dripped off the rounded limbs, to know that it was the plaything of the house, Magdalen Mary, who lay before me.

"She was with us yonder," several of the girls began explaining at once, as I hastened to take what measures I could for restoring the child. "She'd been talkin' o' yeller flowers for Nettie; but we didn't guess what she meant, an' she'd slipped away without none of us noticein', when we heard a screech from 'ere, an' guessed what it was, an' run—Oh! m'm," as the child moved in my arms, "she's comin' to. She ain't dead! Oh! Magdalen Mary, 'ow could yer? What would Nettie ha' said?"

A voice from behind answered—hardly a voice either, but a low, hoarse cry—so weak, and yet so full of anguish, that we all turned round and saw, perhaps, the most unlikely thing it could have entered into

our heads to see. Nettie, whom I had left burning with fever and tucked up in bed—Nettie herself, standing behind us! How she had got out of the infirmary and across the road without being noticed, no one ever knew; only there she was, barefooted, with her fair hair hanging round her poor blotched face and feverish eyes, and nothing but her little cotton nightgown to protect her from the cold! Someone among the chorus of voices, uttering her sister's name, had reached her; and she had come in answer to it, and was standing in a breach in the hedge, clutching at the prickly, leafless boughs for support, not speaking, save for that one bitter cry, but with her eyes turned in a dumb agony of appeal upon us as the baby-girl, roused, by the familiar name, from the half-stupor brought on as much by fright as by her cold douche, lifted up her pretty round face and stretched out her arms to her sister with a passionate cry, "Nettie! Nettie! come to Maglin! Maglin fell in water. Wanted to fin' oo an' take oo de pitty flowers. Let me go, naughty lady! Let me go! Me wants my Nettie! Oh, Nettie, take me; me so cold."

The child was struggling with all its might to escape from my arms. A few battered yellow marigolds, the cause of its accident, had fallen from the little blue fingers, as they tried to beat a way to freedom and Nettie. Some of the girls were crying with gladness because of her safety. Fortunately the matron came up at the same moment with one of the nurses and carried the sick girl back to the infirmary, while I took the little one up to the schools, to be dried and warmed and have her wet clothes removed by a good fire. She had not been in the water more than three minutes after all, so there was really nothing the matter with her beyond a ducking; but not even "sweets," or the loan of another child's coveted doll, could still her sobs for Nettie—Nettie whom she had been trying to reach, and who had appeared for one tantalising moment only to forsake her again—Nettie, who was in a far worse way now than the little sister had any power of imagining. She fairly cried herself to sleep before I left her.

The elder girl died early the next morning. The sudden exposure to a bleak east wind had driven the disease inwards. Inflammation of the lungs set in within a couple of hours, and though all that could be done for her was done, it was

evident, even before the doctor came, that the poor child's hours on earth were numbered. Before leaving he said, whispering, as he turned away from paying his evening visit, "Are you going to remain here? Very kind of you. She won't live through the night, you know. Sinking fast now."

She did, however, and I never left her; nor, through all the long hours and the cruel pain she suffered, did I once hear a word of complaint pass her lips. The nurse had told her that Magdalen Mary was sleeping soundly, and none the worse for her bath, and from that moment there was a bright look on her face which even physical suffering could only cloud, not drive away for good. Later on in the evening, however, when she got so much worse, that she asked and was told she was dying, her eyes filled with tears and the poor little work-worn hands were clenched together on the coverlid as she wailed out:

"Oh! whatever will my baby do? Whatever, ever, will my baby do without me!" but when kneeling beside her I took her hands in mine and whispered to her that Magdalen Mary should be in my care, and find a home with me till she was old enough to go to a good school, such a smile broke over the small face, a moment back all lined and drawn with pain, that it seemed as if the very glory of God were shining in it. She spoke very little during the remainder of the night. Now and then exhaustion, or the pain of breathing, would force a moan from her, but it was always followed by a smile or an attempt to kiss my hand, which she held in her shrunken fingers, as if there were some ingratitude in even feeling her own sufferings after the joy of my promise to her; and towards morning she fell into a quiet sleep which lasted till nearly seven o'clock. The sun was shining brightly when she woke, and lit up the mortal pallor of her face and the yellow cowslips which I had brought her yesterday, and which stood in a coarse blue cup beside the bed. Up in the boughs of a pear-tree a blackbird was singing merrily, and a whole family of fowls clucked and chucked in the yard behind the cottage. Stooping down to her, I saw that there were tears in her eyes, and asked her if there was anything she wanted.

"Only to see my baby onst again. If I could but ha' kissed her onst; an' I can't, I know I can't;" and, with the words, the



tears rolled down her face for the first time uncontrolled.

"My child," I said, very much moved, "if it will comfort you, you shall see her; not in here, lest she should take the infection, but at the window. I will send for one of the girls to bring her, if it will comfort you, Nettie;" and I sent a message to the schools accordingly. Poor Nettie's face was shining.

"Lift me that I may see nearer," she whispered hoarsely, and then lay back against my shoulder gasping for breath, her dim eyes gazing with a pitiful yearning into the blue sky beyond. Outside, the blackbird still filled the air with joyous trills of song; and a long, straggling branch of sweet-briar tapped lightly at the casement in the gentle breeze. Another moment, and the branch was pushed aside by a sturdy pink hand, and a round face rosy with health, and framed in wavy curls, golden as the guilty marigolds which lay on Nettie's pillow, was lifted up to the window instead.

"Me see my Nettie!" shouted the joyous baby voice. "Maglin see Nettie! Nettie, me dood now, twite dood; not go in water nor nuffin no more."

Poor Nettie! I think she tried to speak; but she was too far gone for any words to be audible through the parched white lips. The morning sun, shining in at the casement, threw the shadow of the curly head and little clapping hands athwart Nettie's pillow, and the white-washed wall behind. With a last effort, the poor child turned her face round, and pressed her lips to the shadow of the chubby fingers which were still beating at the window.

The next moment she was gone.

#### LOADED WAINS.

FROM the broad fields, their golden glory shorn,  
And sunny uplands, of their beauty reft,  
Through the still sunlight of the autumn morn,  
And hedgerows, with their lingering jewels left,  
By the brown river, through the leafy lanes,  
On to the farmsteads move the loaded wains.

The stalwart reaper bears his brightened scythe,  
Or tracks the course the great machine has made,  
And bonnie lass and lad, sunburnt and lithe,  
Round whose straw hats woodbine and poppies fade,  
Wake all the meadow land with harvest strains,  
Clustering and laughing round the loaded wains.

'Tis soft September nature's harvest yields,  
But all through life our ripening fruit we reap,  
Now storing violets from sweet April fields,  
Now roses that bright July sunshines steep,  
Now garnering gray October's sober gains,  
Now Christmas hollies pile our loaded wains.

Ah me! how fast the fair spring flowers die,  
How summer blossoms perish at the touch,  
And Hope and Love in useless sympathy,  
Weep for the Faith that gave and lost so much!  
From half our sheaves drop out the golden grains,  
Small is our portion in the loaded wains.

Yet, ere the mighty Reaper takes it all,  
Fling out the seed, and tend it rood by rood;  
One ear is full, though hundreds round it fall,  
One acre 'mid a mildewed upland good;  
Eternity will rear on heavenly plains  
The smallest treasure won from loaded wains.

#### ATHLETES AT EASE.

FAMILIAR and venerable, in the athletic traditions and usages of at least one great school, is a division of the "sprightly race" pursuing their studies thereat, according to the element on which their favourite pastime is taken. Those who most delight to "cleave with pliant arm the glassy wave" are comprehended under the title of "wet bobs," those who "urge the flying ball" are known as "dry bobs." The terminology and the distinction are not mentioned by Gray in his famous ode on A Distant Prospect of Eton College, but they were probably as old as the days of that classically correct poet. It is a distinction that does duty as the principle of the selection of sides in rowing, or cricket, and foot-ball matches, that has even its social influences and ramifications, and that is the occasion of not a little collective and individual rivalry. When in due time the "wet bob" or "dry bob" ceases to be a schoolboy, and becomes an undergraduate, the distinction acquires greater definiteness, and its social consequences are more clearly felt. The life of the cricketer, who dedicates himself to the sport with a consuming ardour that promotes it to a foremost place in the aims of existence, and the life of the oarsman, are quite apart, involve two thoroughly different sets of experiences at Oxford and Cambridge, and elsewhere. As are the pastimes, so are the habits and manners of those who cultivate them. The "wet bob," like the "dry bob," is conspicuous in his dress, his demeanour, his conversation, his opinions upon things in general. In after years the divergencies between the two may disappear, and it may not be easy to decide who is the votary of the M. C. C., and who hails from the London Rowing Club. But at the university, the boating and the cricketering man are each of them a distinct social species.

The "wet bob" has not a little in his ways which may remind one of the British

sailor. Trained in habits of obedience or command, accustomed to give or to receive orders, couched in anything but conciliatory language, the tone of voice in which the "wet bob" speaks is sharp, his manner brusque, his talk professional. The aquatic undergraduate discourses exclusively of things appertaining to his trim-built wherry, to the prowess of himself, his friends, or enemies. Whether it be in his own rooms, by the bank of his river, on the lawn of the Red Lion at Henley, it is the same. His vocabulary is full of the choicest flowers of the oarsman's argot, and if the conversation strays off to some such striking theme as the beauty of the weather, or the picturesqueness of the scene, he brings it back promptly and peremptorily to the topics of sliding-seats, the catch at the beginning, training and its principles, rival crews and their prospects. Mere superficial polish of bearing is a thing which he is apt to despise. "The hard gray weather," Charles Kingsley has told us, "makes hard Englishmen," and upon this particular order of hard young Englishmen it is not only the hardness of weather which has asserted its influence. It is not alone a régime of strict bodily self-denial to which the youth who is ambitious of aquatic fame must submit. He must have tolerated without wincing, at some time or other, such volleys of vituperative exhortation as only the aquatic "coach" can discharge. When in the days of his novitiate he has been straining every muscle, and each successive tug at the willow has seemed as if it must be the last which exhausted nature can make, he will have been told that he is "doing no work," and will have been assured, with many emphatic embellishments of language, that he has no idea how to manage an oar. Perhaps of late years new amenities have been introduced into the ordeal of aquatic training. But even then the rite is and must be a strict one. Nor, with the exception of the prospect of figuring ultimately as one of eight heroes of popular admiration, and of speeding past the winning-post a bare length ahead of one's rivals amid a tempest of cheers from the banks, is there much that appeals to the imagination, or that can be considered likely pleasantly to excite the enthusiasm of the aspirant oarsman. After he has been drilled into the decent performance of his duties, there are the rigours of the stern, relentless training, unrelieved by little of social pleasure or

delight; there are no late lounging breakfasts, no cosy dinners, no smoking. The captain of the boat is ever near to see that he violates none of the prescribed rules of the truly self-denying ordinance. There are early runs round meadows in the morning, followed by breakfasts substantial rather than enjoyable; wholesome dinners devoured fiercely, and, for the most part, in silence; and the consciousness of a grave physical responsibility from which there is no escape. The régime is one that has, of course, its influence upon the individual character, and the ideal oarsman gradually acquires a severe solemnity of manner, which finds its relief in exhibitions of extravagantly frolicsome fun.

It is true that he has his reward for all this, and there is a very bright side indeed, rich in everything that is socially delectable, to the career of the conscientious and successful aquatic. He is the object of an amount and a quality of hero-worship which is denied even to the triumphant cricketer. His name is on the lips of all the world, and every feature in his face, as well as every characteristic of his "stroke," is intimately known in a thousand households. After all, there is a strong strain of the old Norse pirate in the composition of the modern Englishman, and, for the matter of that, in the modern Englishwoman; and whether it be the yachtsman who circumnavigates the globe, or who is first in a modest race from Gravesend to the Nore, or the member of a victorious crew in an outrigger eight, or the champion sculler over a four-mile course, he attracts the instinctive admiration of the immediate bystanders and of society in general. There is another compensation for the severe rigours of aquatic training of which our oarsman can boast. In these glorious summer months, when the scenery of the banks of the Thames can compare with that of any river in the world; when the waters of the Thames, almost from its mouth to its source—certainly from London-bridge to Richmond, and again from Richmond to Henley—are alive with pleasure-craft of every size; when young men and maidens in the neighbourhood of the great city seem to rush to the river as naturally as young ducks do to the farm-yard pond, the "wet bob," who has given his attention to his calling, and who has attained a fair amount of eminence in his art, is in enormous request. Now is the

time for him to feel and to enjoy his superiority over the mere "dry bob." His is the precedence in all water excursions, and his the escort, of which the fair wearers of the prettiest and nattiest river-costumes imaginable, avail themselves with alacrity, and not without some pride—for why should not the feminine breast experience the same thrill of satisfaction with a place in a deftly-managed boat, as with a place on the box-seat of the well-horsed, consummately-driven drag?

Nevertheless, the purely social attractions of the cricketer's life considerably surpass those of the hero of the river. There is an ease and freedom in the kind of existence which the wielders of the willow possess, that have quite an incomparable charm. He must, to a certain extent, "train," no doubt. He must eschew hours inordinately late, and a diet injudiciously generous. But there is none of the severity—one might even say the asceticism—of daily routine which the oarsman has to practise. A boat-race, again, may be compared to a flash, a cricket-match to a steady illumination. The rival craft speed past with a lightning pace and they are gone; the cricketer, if he have his fair share of human vanity, may reflect that for minutes—nay, it may be hours together—he fills a certain place in the public eye. And then what a cheery round of physical exertion and social pleasure it is! The well-played innings; the plaudits that greet the batsman when he retires to the pavilion, having puzzled by turn all the bowlers in the enemy's camp, but yielding at last to the fortune of war; the congratulations of his comrades; the pleasant chat with his friends among the bystanders; the fielding out; the brilliant catch; the well-stopped ball; finally, the welcome announcement that the last wicket of the other side is down; the summons to lunch; the smoke afterwards, and in due time the resumption of the station at the wicket—each one of these incidents has about it a kind of inspiration which, as Horace puts it in his panegyric on the athletes of old, raises the "lords of the land to the level of the gods."

But we have to do with the cricketer, not when he is on, but when he is off duty. It is, therefore, not necessary to dwell on the genius of the game, nor to point out particularly what is perhaps one of its chief charms—the encouragement for in-

dividuality of action, and diversity of excellence as compared with boating. Something, of course, there is to be said on the other side. Regarded as an amusement for ingenuous youth, whether at school or college, the cricket-field involves greater expenditure of time and money than the river. Boating is the relaxation of one who might very well be the most assiduous of literary students, and destined to win the highest academic laurels from his alma mater. Further, to take the case of the undergraduate at either university, while five or six pounds a year will defray the necessary expenses of the "wet bob," thrice that sum will be barely sufficient for the cricketer. There are the fees of professionals for practice of the afternoon on the Cowley or at Fenner's Ground. There are all the necessary extravagances of the summer term. The undergraduate who devotes himself to cricket will find that after twelve o'clock he has no further time for study. There is the drag waiting at the college gate to take him up to the scene of action; it will be seven o'clock when the stumps are drawn, and then the teams will return to dine—but not in the college hall.

But let us take, as is just to do, a far wider view of what is deservedly called our national game. The cricket-field, infinitely more than the hunting-field, is entitled to rank as a true national civiliser. It is almost a commonplace to say that it provides those opportunities for general intercourse on a footing of equality, in country districts and in urban neighbourhoods as well, which hunting can only afford to a comparatively limited number. It really places a thousand joys of life within the reach of those who, without the solace of their prowess with the bat and ball, would find existence a very humdrum and monotonous affair. It acts as the social cement of classes, and it is a legitimate outlet for whatever democratic aspirations there may be in the English breast. Whether he be an impecunious subaltern in a regiment quartered in a garrison town, or whether he be the son of some local professional man, the cricketer—some degree of proficiency must of course be postulated—carries with him his own credentials. His skill in the game gradually superinduces a recognition of excellence of character, which would certainly otherwise have been ignored. He makes friends, and he has the entrée of agreeable and eligible houses. It is no exaggeration to say

—and the statement, which is here not rashly made, may be weighed with satisfaction by the parents and guardians of young athletes who have loved cricket perhaps not wisely but too well—that more valuable acquaintances, more permanent and fruitful friendships, have been made in the cricket-field than in any other social rendezvous of the United Kingdom. The cricketer's life is certainly the most purely enjoyable which any young man could lead. Is there any week in England, or in the world, like the Canterbury week? It is of course overcrowded with amusements of every kind—balls, dinners, private theatricals, and what not. Yet each of these entertainments belongs to the list of the social accessories of the cricketer's career. Excellent treatises, almost innumerable, have been written on the subject of cricket. But the Izaak Walton of the pastime has still to appear. The immortal Izaak, indeed, was the apostle and panegyrist of angling, not merely regarded from the point of view of sport, but as the chosen opportunity of pious calm, and, if needful, total seclusion. Seclusion, indeed, is incompatible with modern cricket. But the genius of the age is not the same now as it was three centuries and a half ago. If the niche which the friend and colleague of Cotton left vacant, the theme which he should select is that of the cricketer and his life. In the year 1559 isolation from the rest of one's kind did not mar the idea of pure enjoyment; now such isolation is impossible; what is called society is a mob, or rather an aggregate of mobs: what charmed a Walton would not charm his descendants. Therefore, one is warranted in saying that, always supposing him amenable to the spirit of the age, the author of the Complete Angler, if he had lived now, would have chosen the boat rather than the bat as his companion.

But the purely social advantages of athleticism are very far from being confined either to the river or the cricket-field. What is to be said of the whole race of bicyclists, pedestrians, runners of races, jumpers of hurdles, of high and broad leaps? It is comparatively little, as it is absolutely nothing to our present purpose, that each of these recreations tends to promote and preserve a sound mind in a sound body. They must necessarily transform all the ideas of social enjoyment, which were once current among the classes from whom their votaries are chiefly chosen. A

courageous and a muscular race our young men have always been. The adoption of the institutions now named has made them a race, which seeks its pleasures in the paths, which regard to the traditions of English manhood and the precepts of hygienic science indicate. Further, these are each of them recreations which have secured, long ere this, a public as appreciative and admiring as has fallen to the lot of our "wet bobs" or "dry bobs." Yet the chief advantage of all still remains to be mentioned. Bicycles and athletic sports, like rifle volunteering, have neutralised the temptations which, before they were established and recognised amongst us, existed for a very pernicious variety of idleness—that which can be described by no better word than loafing. Athleticism may not have crowned all its votaries with the laurels of social heroism, but it has disseminated a thoroughly healthy and energising taste amongst our young men. It has taken them away from the smoking-room and the billiard-room at unreasonable hours; it has done more than any other invention of this century has done towards stamping out that physical and moral malady which, in the pages of this journal, was once powerfully described by the author of *David Copperfield* as "dry rot in men."

## DOUBLEDAY'S CHILDREN.

BY DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c. &c.

BOOK V. THE FURTHER NARRATIVE OF BASIL DOUBLEDAY.

CHAPTER I. THE SIX POINTS.

MR. GRISDALE had been compelled to effect another change in the title of his newspaper: it was now called *The Volcano*; and, certainly, its utterances were of an explosive and detonating character. Otherwise the little organ was harmless, and even somewhat weakly of aspect. However, it fairly expressed the views of certain classes, and was recognised as their literary representative.

Political questions speedily grow cold and old, and fossilise. It is hard to believe that the dry bones ever lived, that the extinct ashes were ever quick with flame. Time is a great disenchanter; the present satirises and mocks the past. How toneless sound the old war-cries! Had they ever musical force and meaning



enough to thrill men's pulses, and set their hearts beating turbulently? Could the world ever have troubled itself to differ and divide about this? was there really serious bandying of words or interchange of blows touching such triviality as that? How small seem the great topics when we look back at them, even from a very little distance!

Yet, be it understood, the times in which The Volcano gave forth its words of fiery menace to its foes, of rallying and encouragement to its friends, were grave enough in all conscience. Intense discontent prevailed; sorrow and suffering, crime and poverty, were on every side. Society was split and splintered into classes and factions; human sympathies seemed paralysed; between rich and poor a great gulf was fixed; violent collision between the people and its rulers appeared more and more imminent.

If things were bad in England they were ten times worse in Ireland. There had been grievous famine and pestilence. Horrifying stories of want and suffering had filled the newspapers. Thousands upon thousands had been down-stricken by disease. Hunger, nakedness, sickness, and misery most desperate had ravaged the land. The workhouses and fever hospitals had been overcrowded with the dead and dying. "Death from the effects of starvation and destitution, caused by a want of the common necessities of life," was the dreadful, monotonous verdict, day after day pronounced so long as it had been possible to hold inquests. But the coroners complained, and with reason, of overwork; mortality was too swift and too busy for them. Nor could the undertakers keep pace with the famine. They could not make coffins fast enough. Indeed, time would scarcely permit of the corpses being borne to the churchyards. There were instances of the dead being interred hastily where they fell, or in the nearest field. The people, maddened by starvation, flew to arms. With their last pence they bought gunpowder instead of bread. They entered upon a mad warfare with the authorities. Famine riots ensued—wild conflicts with the soldiery and police. The bread shops were broken into and pillaged; the meal and provision stores were sacked and destroyed; whole towns were despoiled as by an invading force. A great army of starving peasants laid waste the country, stripping the towns of their stock, the fields of their grain, and

lying in wait even to wreck the ships in the seaports, to plunder the cargoes of corn and Indian flour, or to rob the cattle on board of their half-eaten turnips. Crime and outrage occurred in every quarter, and with the cries of the starving mingled the complaints and revilings of the politically disaffected, of those who, in addition to their individual grievances, believed that they had also the wrongs of their country to avenge.

I speak of things as I found them; as they seemed to me. But I do not claim for myself any specially enlightened view of the situation. Indeed, I can see now that I was very prejudiced, that I was without originality of judgment, that my sentiments took their form and colour from the opinions of those about me. In truth, there were many, very many, who thought with even more despondency and apprehension than I did of the political position.

We charged the Government with bringing about the troubles of the people. We insisted upon parliamentary action in the matter. We demanded most radical and comprehensive reforms. The more zealous amongst us advocated revolution. For my part, I was a democrat, a Chartist. I believed, with the party I had joined, that The People's Charter, as it was called, comprised the real remedy for the maladies and misfortunes under which the country laboured.

But if this Charter were refused us, must we wrest it violently from our rulers? That question divided us. It was very hard to answer it. There were "physical-force Chartists," and "moral-force Chartists." But it was soon made clear to us that, in our case, "moral force" was an inefficient and almost powerless instrument. It would not pick the lock of the iron-bound doors Parliament had slammed in our faces. There appeared real necessity for action of a decisive kind—for deeds taking the place of words. The system of agitation we had entered upon led us, by what seemed a natural process, to aggression and revolt.

Let us not be too harshly judged. We were but bettering the instruction we had received. We were simply executing the villainy we had been taught. We had learnt from the very men who now formed the Government of the time, to look to political change as the remedy for social wrongs and miseries, and to force on such change as best we could by angry menaces,

and, if need were, by riot and rebellion. Our rulers had risen to power by inflaming the passions of the people. The legislation of 1832 was in a great degree the result of insurrection; the law had been defied and outraged, towns had been fired, a furious mob had threatened to march upon London. Sedition had then seemed to be a reasonable, an excusable, almost a lawful thing. And it had succeeded. Why should we not try sedition again?

The working classes, the poorer classes, the lower classes, describe us as you will—for I counted myself of them—felt grievously insulted, cajoled, injured. Year by year our state appeared to grow more and more hopeless, our wrongs deeper and deeper. By our sacrifices and struggles we had obtained power for others, not for ourselves; indeed we had but increased the number of our oppressors, endowed them with enlarged capacity for oppression. It was very necessary that a new effort should be made, and that there should be no mistake about it this time.

Were we turning from one quack medicine to another? The Reform Bill having failed us, was our new panacea, with its famous Six Points, so marvellously sure to cure our maladies, to restore us to social and political health? Thousands upon thousands of Englishmen so believed. At least our adored Charter would admit us to a share in the government of the nation. "The possession of one ten-thousandth part of a talker in the national palaver," so a cynic described the poor privilege we craved so anxiously, we strove for so desperately.

No doubt the Charter was foolishly, extravagantly, ignorantly regarded by too many of us. It was as a word of magic, a spell of exceeding potency. We contemplated it until our tired, dazed eyes endowed it with gigantic size and strength, purpose and significance. It was to us an object of devotion and worship as the Caaba of Mecca to the Moslems. We credited it with talismanic virtues, with almost divine influences and attributes. It was to abolish injustice for ever; it was to establish right everywhere; it was to regenerate the world. The Charter ours, and there would be an end throughout all time of sickness and want, of trouble and discontent, of war and crime, of hatred, malice, and of all uncharitableness. It was a dream; nevertheless to us it was a very real thing for a season.

I must own that I am not setting forth precisely my own opinion upon the subject, and that I was held by many to be but a half-hearted adherent of the cause. In truth I could not rise to the fever-heat of my friends' enthusiasm. At the same time I do not wish to disconnect myself from the men with whom I was acting. I would be viewed as one of them. I will not pretend that my judgment was superior to theirs. But there were grains of misgiving mixed with my faith in the Charter. And if I never doubted the honesty of intention of those supporting it, their wisdom and prudence seemed to me oftentimes gravely open to question.

A halo of vagueness encircled the Charter; in like manner a haze obscured the plans of its advocates. They spoke plainly of wringing it from the Government by violence, if no other way were left open to them—were constant in their threats of recourse to "ulterior measures." Brave words enough and to spare were uttered; upon certain of our rulers torrents of invective were poured; they were now held up to withering contempt, and now denounced as objects of furious detestation. I do not, of course, defend the taste or the sense of much that was said. Fervid oratory is apt at all times to effervesce, and overflow into mere froth and foolishness. No doubt the broadest license of rhetoric was often exceeded by our speakers—men of little learning or refinement—addressing themselves to a rude and vulgar, and even somewhat barbarous audience. But it was hard to believe that they really meant all they said; that, in hurling defiance at the Government, in counselling the people to take arms against their oppressors, in bidding the world observe the grand spectacle of the triumph of liberty and justice over tyranny and inhumanity, they were actually prepared for civil war, and proposed forthwith to do battle with disciplined troops, to face bayonets and grape-shot in the public streets.

"You must form your own opinion, my dear boy," said Lucius Grisdale, in reply to questioning of mine upon the subject. "You are quite as competent to judge as I am. Only bear in mind that it is as well sometimes to say rather more than you mean—some people can only be reached and impressed by exaggeration—and to ask for a good deal more than you expect to get. For, as a rule, you know, we don't get more than we ask for, but less;

so it doesn't do to ask for too little. As to being serious about this matter, I can only answer for myself and *The Volcano*. We are very serious; don't let there be any question about that. We must have the Charter by fair means or by foul. As for fighting, why should we hold back from fighting for a good cause?"

"You think there will be fighting?"

"It is possible. Tyranny usually strikes a blow before it falls, or before it runs away. It was so, you remember, in 1830. That did not prevent the soldiers of Charles the Tenth from fraternising with the people. They embraced with effusion; they shed tears of mutual joy, congratulating each other on having so happily accomplished the deliverance of their country. It was not really delivered, as it happened; but they honestly believed it was—that was enough for them."

"The victories of 1830—if they are to be called victories—were not bought without bloodshed."

"That is true. All victories have their victims. The front rank falls to form a rampart of corpses, over which the rear presses to the triumph of the good cause. Who will form the front rank? Well, I will for one. I can set a good example. If I may not fight like a soldier—for, alas! I'm very small and feeble, and I grow old fast—still I can die like a soldier, with my face to the foe. I can show the rest that death is not so hard a thing when one dies for the right."

It was impossible to doubt the little man's courage or his integrity. He continued:

"You think that the sight of death would terrify rather than encourage? It might, at first; but bloodshed infuriates, maddens. Our people are not used to fighting—are not trained to arms. Well, the undisciplined French mob beat back the skilled hirelings of tyranny; and will again when the right time arrives. It is vain to say that the populace cannot conquer an army. Why, they've done it! I grant you there might be some shrinking back at the first roar of the cannon—the first sight of death in their ranks. There might be panic and flight, very likely; for bloodshed is an awful thing; and, when volleys are being fired, there's no knowing who may be hit—possibly one's precious self. But those who fled would return; their cause, being a good cause, would give them heart, and strength, and courage; they would return again and

again. Even suppose them unarmed, their numbers would be so vast, they would simply walk down their foes—who would be as atoms in the presence of an avalanche passing over and crushing them. It would be the army of the people overwhelming the miserable janissaries of despotism. Is the result for a moment doubtful?"

"You are speaking of English soldiers," I reminded him.

"That's true. They are English soldiers, and, to my thinking, that is a good reason for believing that they would not point their guns at the English people; that they would not side with the oppressors against the oppressed. But we shall see, it may be, one of these fine mornings. Meanwhile, let them not despise us overmuch, as an unarmed mob. When the liberties of a nation are at stake, the first thing that comes to hand may prove a formidable weapon of offence, let it be either the spits from the kitchen, the hammer from the forge, or the poker, tongs, and shovel from the fireside, or the railings from our squares, and parks, and areas. Why, sir, the women would wield their mopsticks, the children would fling stones on behalf of the good cause. You look serious, Basil."

"I think we are speaking of a very serious matter, Mr. Grisdale."

"Everything in life is serious, more or less. But don't let us make things out to be more serious than they really are. As the editor of *The Volcano* I am bound to use strong language; my public expect it of me; they would not buy my paper if they did not find strong language in it. I don't mince matters; I never have minced matters, and I am not going to mince matters now. I am staunch, Basil. So far as I am concerned, I stand by every word I've written in *The Volcano*. If we can't get what we want, and what we ought to have, except by fighting for it, then I say let us fight for it. I'll fight with the rest, and in the front rank, as I stated just now. But the immediate question is not one of fighting. What we have to do just now is, to show the foe that we are in earnest. He must be frightened, or he'll yield us nothing. Well, to frighten him, we must bounce a little, and spout our loudest, and attitudinise a good deal. In plain words, we must kick up a row—in genteeler terms, we must enlighten society by means of a grand demonstration! That's what we are going to do. We keep physical force and ulterior measures in

the background for a little; they are not to be called into action, until the right moment has arrived, and everything else has failed. I don't say that they won't be frequently mentioned in *The Volcano*—because they will. It will be my task to tell my readers to prepare for the worst. Meanwhile, we respect the law—we proceed constitutionally. Our grievances are once more to be brought before Parliament; a deputation is about to attend upon the Hon. Pierce Plumer, who has undertaken to be our spokesman in the House of Commons."

I gathered from Mr. Grisdale's manner that he was not wholly in favour of this proceeding, but accepted it in deference to the opinion of others.

"It's hard they won't allow us to speak for ourselves," he said. "If they'd only let me address them for half an hour from the bar of the House of Commons, I'd astonish them; I'd show them what popular oratory is really like. I almost think I could die happy, having accomplished that. But there's no help for it. We must be content with Mr. Plumer's advocacy. It's hard, I say again. He's the son of a lord; he oils his hair, and wears a curl on his forehead, and a tuft on his chin. I don't say he isn't clever; to tell the truth, he speaks uncommonly well. But he wears lemon kid gloves. I hate the whole lemon-kidded faction. I can't bear to think of the noble army of the horny-handed sons of toil being led by a son of a lord, an exquisite in lemon-coloured kid gloves."

"But he may be sincere in spite of his gloves!"

"He can't be. We are no more to him than his haberdashery, nor so much. He patronises politics and the Charter as he patronises the turf, the drama, and the fine arts. He is one of the frivolous classes. The world is his playground; life is sport to him. He is the son of Lord Eldridge, Hereditary Grand Popinjay and Clerk of the Feathers to the Crown. What can such a man care about us? How can he be in earnest about anything? He's a good-natured fop, who's made very free with his money, and now hasn't got much of it left. He's very popular; he sits as member for Stratford-at-Bow, and he's looked upon as a sort of tribune of the people. But there's no more to be said. We must accept help for him, and be

thankful. Let it be owned that he doesn't want courage; he has even fought and bled for his country, as a subaltern in a very fashionable and expensive regiment, and he is almost the only man in the House of Commons who dares to express sympathy with our cause. Still, I can't, and I don't respect him very much; for how can we be sure of his good faith? However, you shall judge for yourself, Basil. Join the deputation that is going to wait on the Honourable Pierce Plumer, and trust him, if you can. For my part, I don't like your aristocratic democrats. I've known too many tribunes of the people, and cruelly they've betrayed us. You know what was written of one of them:

"We dreamt that to nobles he ne'er would bow,  
Nor the people's cause disgrace,  
Till he crouched for a coronet rather low  
And wriggled at last to a place;  
And then, when we fancied fight he must  
'Gainst the wrongs he used to blame,  
We found to our very great disgust,  
That his views were not the same!"

"But no cause is secure against treachery. There are traitors in every camp. As I've said before—if you were to turn over the files of my newspapers, I think you would find it many times mentioned—there is always a Judas in every combination of men. He is not an individual; he is a tribe. There are men amongst us, loud and fervent in their profession, who would sell the very Charter itself—at sixpence a point—just like a game of whist!"

Now publishing, the

## EXTRA SUMMER NUMBER

OF

### ALL THE YEAR ROUND,

CONSISTING OF

SEVENTY-TWO PAGES

(The amount of Three Regular Numbers), stitched in a wrapper,

PRICE SIXPENCE,

And containing Complete Stories by

**WILKIE COLLINS**

AND OTHER POPULAR WRITERS.

May be had of all Booksellers and at the Railway Bookstalls.

Arrangements have been made for the commencement, in October, of

## A NEW SERIAL STORY,

BY

**ANTHONY TROLLOPE.**

*The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.*